

Serving the Underserved: Learning from Experiences with Community Music Programs

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Outline

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What is a Community Music Program?

An organization or part of an organization dedicated to providing access to music for a population for whom music study would otherwise be difficult or impossible.



Why community music programs?

Benefits of music study:

- Physiological
 - Improves auditory development
 - Reduces subcortical decline
 - Krizman and Kraus Tierney, “Music training alters the course of adolescent auditory development,” 2015.
- Social
 - Solidarity between people
 - Kathleen Higgins, “Connecting Music to Ethics,” 2018.
- General health
 - Ola Ekholm, Knud Juel and Lars Ole Bonde, “Associations Between Daily Musicking and Health,” 2016.
- Personal
 - Fulfillment
 - Accomplishment
 - Skill refinement
 - Peter Jutras, “The Benefits of Adult Piano Study as Self-Reported by Selected Adult Piano Students,” 2006.
- Academic
 - Darby Southgate and Vincent Roscigno, “The Impact of Music on Childhood and Adolescent Achievement,” 2009.



Why community music programs?

The Need

- Measurable gap between those who receive music instruction and those who do not
 - Related to socioeconomic status (SES) and family background
 - Adria Hoffman, “Compelling Questions about Music, Education, and Socioeconomic Status,” 2013.
- Study found students in HS music ensembles were twice as likely to be in highest SES quartile than in lowest SES quartile
 - Kenneth Elpus and Carlos R. Abril, “High School Music Ensemble Students in the United States: A Demographic Profile,” 2011.
- Musicians and music teachers are pivotal in the effort to address the need

What is holding you back from getting involved?



Methodology

- Interviews with directors of 7 community music programs (CMPs) via:
 - In person meeting
 - Video conference
 - Phone call
 - Email - written responses
- Discussed 10 pre-crafted interview questions
- Analysis and summarization of data



Overview of Programs

Name of Organization	Location	Date Founded	Contact Interviewed
Allegro School of Music	Grand Rapids, MI	1992	Rick Wiltse
Armstrong Community Music School	Austin, TX	2000	Sarah Beth Gooding
Austin Soundwaves	Austin, TX	2011	Frank Jenkins
Central Music Academy	Lexington, KY	2005	Erin Walker Bliss
Flint School for Performing Arts	Flint, MI	1971	Davin Pierson Torre
Louisville Academy of Music	Louisville, KY	1954	Sara Louise Callaway
SA'OAXACA	Oaxaca, Mexico	2019	Gwendolyn Ryan

Partnerships

- Take a wide variety of forms
- Connect CMP to specific populations
- Expand opportunities for students
- Promotion and recruitment

“The idea is that we’re building connections and that we’re bringing people into those spaces.”

~ Sarah Beth Gooding



Partnerships



Schools and Churches



**Senior Centers,
Community Centers**



Social Services



**Other Arts
Organizations**

Partnerships are important for expanding our reach and making a bigger impact.

~ Sara Louise Callaway



Funding



- Grants
- Donors
- Revenue from classes, lessons, and/or programs



Obstacles

A silhouette of a person pushing a large, dark rock on a rocky shore at sunset. The sky is filled with warm, golden light and scattered clouds. The water is visible in the background, reflecting the sunset colors.

Space/location

Funding

Staff size

Pandemic

What happens
outside of
one's control

Goal setting
and tracking

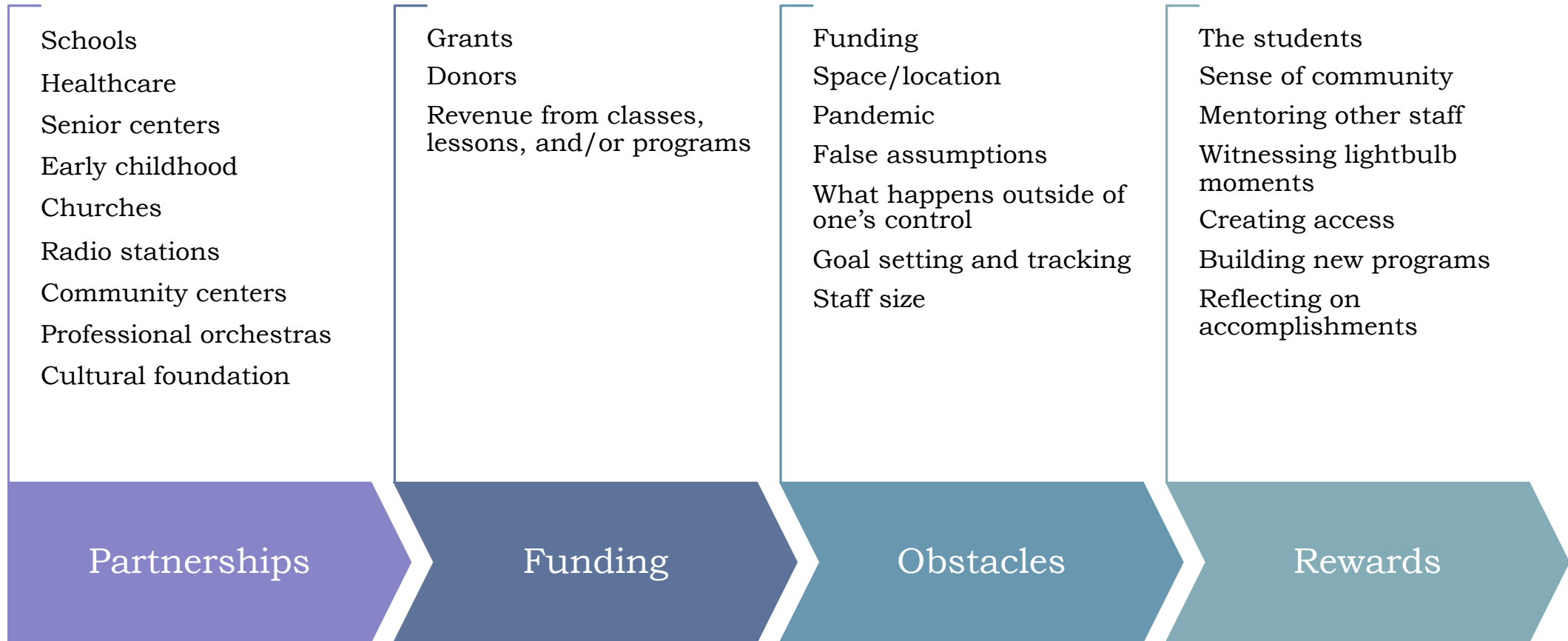
False
assumptions

Rewards

- The people
- Sense of community
- Time with kids
- Mentoring other staff
- Witnessing lightbulb moments
- Creating access
- Building new programs
- Reflecting on accomplishments



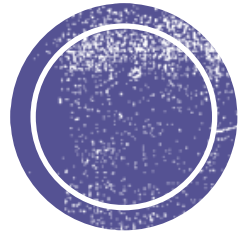
Results





The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.

Walt Disney



Preparing Yourself for Community Work

**Develop
non-
performance
skills**

**Seek
mentorship**

**Build
Network**

**Listen to
your
community**



Develop non-performance skills

I. Technical skills

- Arts administration: look for internships
- Non-profit management: volunteer, job shadow
- Business/finance/accounting: take a class

II. Soft skills

- Receptivity: ask for feedback, accept criticism
- Resilience: persist despite failures
- Flexibility and creativity: adapt or redirect when necessary





Seek Mentorship

- Great way to learn more about the field, gain insight
- Most interviewees mentioned having mentorship and recommended seeking it out
- Contact the director of an organization you admire
- May need several people to mentor in different areas

“You have so many resources that you can access, but there isn’t anything like being able to just honestly call somebody up and say, ‘Hey, can you believe this just happened to me – I’m not sure what to do.’”





Build Network

- Attend concerts and events
- Follow people and organizations on social media
- Volunteer, offer services
- Collaborate with colleagues
- Join local and national associations
- Find out what is already being done in your community, what is still lacking



Listen to Your Community

- Make sure students and families have a voice
- Do not impose programming
- Most successful programs address needs presented by constituents
- Get to know what organizations there already are

Probably the most important thing is to be really involved in the arts scene wherever you are, and to use that as an opportunity to understand what the need is. I think probably the biggest mistake is to come into a place and kind of assume that something isn't happening. ~ Frank Jenkins

Summary

Wide variety of partnerships

Funded by donations, grants
and lesson revenue

Obstacles encountered are many
and diverse

Greatest rewards relate to the
people

Develop non-performance skills

Seek mentorship

Build network

Listen to your community

**"If you have a
passion and a
strong heart
GO FOR IT!
It takes a lot of
energy and
determination but
we need more
community music
programs!!"**





Thank you!

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